

## THE RHODE ISLAND READING EXCELLENCE PANEL

The Rhode Island Reading Excellence Panel was convened in the spring of 1999 by Governor Lincoln Almond and Commissioner Peter McWalters and charged with the responsibility of developing a policy framework for reading to ensure that by 2005, no less than 90 percent of fourth grade students will meet or exceed proficiency standards in English language arts and mathematics. A fact-finding subcommittee then constructed a picture of the current state of reading instruction in Rhode Island using:

- ✍ ✍ information about the current practices collected from practitioners and professional associations
- ✍ ✍ the expressed needs of school districts based on the results of the state assessments
- ✍ ✍ perceptions of curriculum and instruction from the School Accountability for Learning and Teaching (SALT) surveys

This group identified the need for *continued* development in the following areas:

- ✍ ✍ schools' use of programs based on scientifically-based approaches to the teaching of reading in kindergarten through grade three and continuing reading instruction into the later elementary grades
- ✍ ✍ effective professional development programs
- ✍ ✍ the relationship between higher education teacher preparation and certification programs and their impact on elementary education
- ✍ ✍ early childhood literacy programs to ensure that *all* children come to school ready to learn to read
- ✍ ✍ family literacy programs to strengthen literacy skills of children and adults
- ✍ ✍ statewide support for reading and literacy

The Rhode Island Reading Excellence Panel began formal meetings in March 1999 with the following members:

### **Co-Chairs**

Marie C. DiBiasio, Assistant Dean of Education, Roger Williams University  
James A. DiPrete, Chair, Board of Regents for Elementary and Secondary Education

### **Teacher Unions**

National Education Association (NEA): Harvey Press  
American Federation of Teachers (AFT): Marcia Reback

### **Children's Cabinet**

Christine Ferguson, Director of the Rhode Island Department of Human Services  
Barbara Weaver, Director of Library and Information Services

## **Professional Associations**

International Reading Association (IRA): Kathy Hayes

Rhode Island Association for the Education of Young Children; Association for Childhood Education International/Rhode Island and National Teaching Board: Sue Toohey-Kaye

Rhode Island Association of School Administrators (RIASC): Ewa Pytowska and David Costa

Rhode Island Association of School Principals (RIASP): Arlene Miguel

Rhode Island Association of School Boards (RIASB): Gertrude Blakely

## **Community Based Organizations**

Head Start: Larry Pucciarelli

Rhode Island READS: David Morton

## **Business**

Business Round Table: Valerie Forti

Providence Journal: Mary Ellen Ahern

## **Teachers/Librarians/Literacy Directors**

Lauren Wasserman: East Providence-Reading Teacher

Barbara Halzel: Providence-Literacy Specialist

Amelia Chouinard: Cranston-Kindergarten Teacher

Jackie Bourassa: Pawtucket-Reading Teacher

Olivia Neves: Cumberland-ESL Teacher

Helen Litterest: Rhode Island School for the Deaf – Literacy Specialist

Barbara Ashby: Providence-Librarian

## **Adult/Family Literacy**

Even Start: Nancy Ryan: An Even Start in Newport

Special Education Advisory: Natalie Hebbermann

## **State Legislators**

House: Nancy Benoit, Robert Waston

Senate: Thomas Izzo, Dennis Algieri

## **Higher Education**

Dr. William Oehlkers: Rhode Island College

Dr. Robert Carey: Rhode Island College

Dr. Susan Brady: University of Rhode Island  
Dr. Susan Trostle: University of Rhode Island  
Dr. Susan Skawinski: Providence College  
Dr. Camille Allen: Salve Regina University  
Dr. Sandra Hicks: University of Rhode Island

**Department of Education Staff**

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